



Forestry and
Land Scotland
Coilltearachd agus
Fearann Alba

Dalbeattie Forest Framework for Recreation Investment

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1.0 Executive summary

Developed in partnership with the local community and key stakeholders, this concept framework aims to shape the recreational development of Dalbeattie Forest as a key visitor destination in the South of Scotland. Managed by Forestry and Land Scotland (FLS), the concept framework serves as a template for investment in recreational facilities whilst maintaining its commercial forestry role.



Aims of the framework

To offer development opportunities that enhance the visitor experience through several key objectives:

- Investment in recreation infrastructure: significant improvements to trails, signage, car parks, and facilities to cater to a diverse range of visitors, including adventure seekers, family groups, and easy recreationalists.
- Promote accessibility and inclusion: ensuring as many trails and facilities as possible are accessible and inclusive to people of all abilities.
- Economic growth and sustainability: stimulating the local economy by attracting more visitors and creating business opportunities, whilst balancing recreational use with forest conservation and commercial forestry operations.

Key highlights

The proposed trail network for Dalbeattie Forest caters to a wide range of recreational users, with long-distance trails for walkers and cyclists, accessible trails for all abilities, dedicated mountain bike trails, and a designated horse riding loop. This comprehensive approach creates inclusivity and enhances the overall visitor experience. The network will prioritise sustainable design, using durable materials and incorporating climate-resilient drainage systems to

minimise long-term environmental impact and maintenance costs. To further enhance the visitor experience and generate revenue, the development of environmentally sensitive holiday cabins at Mark Hill is proposed as an option. This accommodation option aligns with Forestry and Land Scotland's commitment to responsible tourism and conservation, complementing existing offerings in the area. Any cabin development will undergo thorough assessments to address community concerns regarding visual impact, ecological impact, and transportation and access.

Partnership and collaboration

A successful implementation of the framework hinges on a collaborative approach:

- Partnership approach: cooperation between local communities, public bodies, third-sector organisations, and commercial businesses is crucial. This partnership is essential for securing funding, resources, gaining planning approvals, and ensuring the long-term viability of the projects through a sustainable management model.
- Funding and resource allocation: while FLS will continue to manage the forest for commercial purposes, additional funding from various partners is necessary to realise the framework's vision. This involves developing business cases and securing investments from a range of stakeholders, including consideration for whole life cycle costing and ongoing maintenance.
- Community involvement: engaging with local communities in the planning and implementation process to ensure developments meet local needs and foster a sense of ownership.

Conclusion

Through targeted investments, strategic partnerships, and a focus on accessibility and inclusivity the framework aims to enhance the visitor experience while supporting the local economy and preserving the

natural environment. Achieving this vision will require a sustained partnership approach, with FLS managing the woodland for commercial forestry and collaborating with various stakeholders to secure funding to deliver the potential projects.

2.0 Introduction

2.1 Purpose of the framework

A framework for investment can mean different things to different people and organisations. This document offers a framework for future investment in recreation and visitor services for the communities and visitors of Dalbeattie Forest and its links with Mark Hill and the coast. This framework looks at the outdoor recreation tourism offer in an area encompassing FLS managed land, public land, community land and private ownership to identify future aspirations for the visitor market and the visitor product offer. The framework will also look at key services which are desirable within the visitor offer, considering accommodation, retail, catering and welfare. The framework goes beyond mountain biking and considers the broader outdoor tourism offer in Dalbeattie Forest and Mark Hill.

Delivering the framework will require partnerships between communities, public bodies, third sector and commercial businesses. The framework will create a range of recreation development opportunities. These opportunities can only be realised if planning approval is obtained, funding and business cases are approved and a sustainable management model is in place. There is no guarantee that any of these proposals will be delivered. This framework aims to set a clear vision for the future recreation and tourism offer, to help guide partnerships, funding bids and business cases.

Although FLS is a large land manager in the South of Scotland, we recognise that we need to work collaboratively with communities, businesses and public bodies, to achieve wider success for the rural economy.

2.2 Policy framework

The FLS mission is to look after Scotland's forests and land, for the benefit of all, now and for the future. We therefore take long term planning very seriously, ensuring our resources are best allocated to contribute to improving the environment, economy, health and wellbeing of the nation in a sustainable way. Our [Corporate Plan](#) gives overall direction to the work that we do in managing Scotland's national forests and land. It is supported by our [Business Plan](#) which sets out how we will achieve the objectives identified in the Corporate Plan. Our [Visitor Strategy](#) and our [Community Strategy](#) further detail how we will work with and within our communities and develop our overall visitor offer.

All of our land management is carried out to meet the standards and requirements of the [UK Forestry Standard](#) – the UK's reference standard for managing forests sustainably. It is carried out under Land Management Plans approved by [Scottish Forestry](#), the Scottish Government's agency responsible for forestry policy, support and regulations. A land management plan sets out how we intend to manage a specific area of land for a period of ten years. Usually, the area covered by a plan is a forest or woodland, but it will often include open areas, too. The current [Land Management Plan](#) for Dalbeattie Forest and Mark Hill can be found on our web site. The Dalbeattie Forest Framework for Recreation Investment has been developed using all these documents. In addition, local development plans and development guidance have been considered.

2.3 Background to Dalbeattie Forest

Dalbeattie Forest and Mark Hill ([Figure 1](#)), located near the town of Dalbeattie in Dumfries and Galloway, offer a beautiful and varied landscape for outdoor enthusiasts. The forest features a mix of coniferous and broadleaf trees, alongside open spaces and trails that cater to different interests and abilities. Mark Hill itself provides stunning views of the surrounding countryside and the Solway Coast.

Dalbeattie Forest is important as a 'town wood' for Dalbeattie and is highly valued by the local community as a space for health and wellbeing. The forest is also very important for the local tourism economy – especially the combination of forest and coastline.

The forest is open year-round, with ample opportunities for walking, cycling, and horse riding. There are waymarked trails of varying difficulty, ranging from gentle strolls to more challenging routes. The trails wind through the forest, offering glimpses of wildlife and scenic viewpoints.

Key features

- **Mountain biking:** Dalbeattie Forest is renowned for its mountain biking trails, which cater to all levels of experience from beginner-friendly routes to challenging cross-country tracks.
- **Walking and hiking:** numerous walking trails criss-cross the forest, offering opportunities to explore the diverse landscape. The trails range from short, accessible walks to longer hikes that lead to panoramic views from Mark Hill.
- **Wildlife watching:** the forest is home to a variety of wildlife, including red squirrels, roe deer, and various bird species.
- **Accessibility:** the forest has some accessible trails and facilities, making it suitable for visitors with mobility impairments.

The forest is largely a productive conifer forest with a focus on commercial timber production, and this will continue.

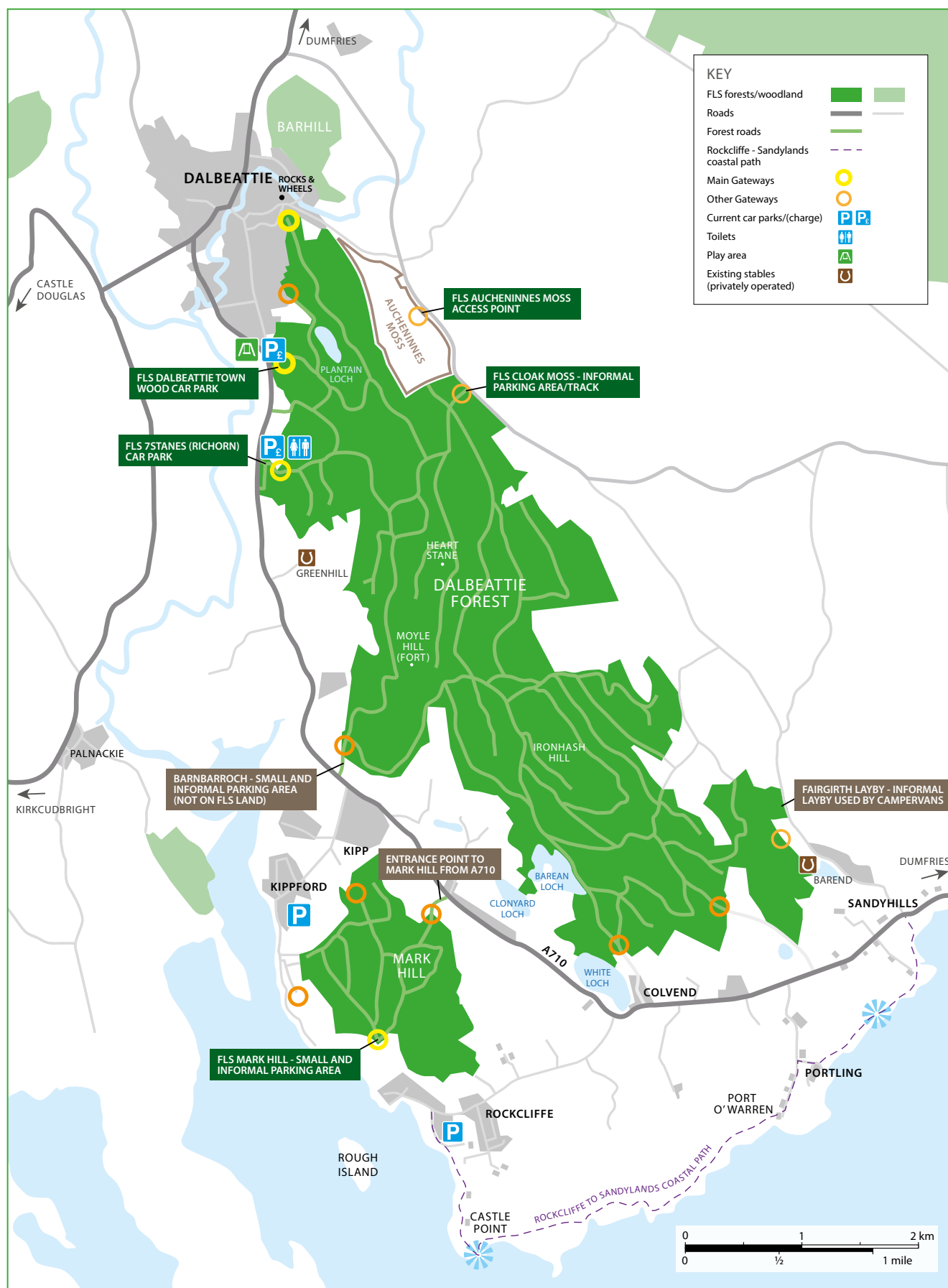


Figure 1: map showing Dalbeattie and Mark Hill forests including access points, in context of Dalbeattie village and surrounding coastal villages.

3.0 Concept aim and objectives

3.1 Concept aim

FLS forests and land will be the destination of choice for exploring the countryside and enjoying outdoor recreation across the south of Scotland. We will collaboratively create and sustainably manage a high quality, diverse and inclusive portfolio of visitor infrastructure and recreational opportunities that meet

the needs of our communities and visitors to the region. Working in partnership with the public, private and charitable sectors we will reinvigorate the forest estate to support the rural economy and regional tourism ambitions, as a multi-use visitor destination.

3.2 Key objectives

1. Enhance accessibility - Improve infrastructure to create opportunities for all abilities and ages.
 2. Diversify visitor activities - Expand recreation options to include hiking, nature watching, and family-friendly activities.
 3. Community and tourism integration - Develop initiatives to strengthen community involvement and foster tourism growth.
 4. Financial sustainability - Implement strategies to ensure long-term financial viability, foster partnerships for investment and support.
 5. Environmental stewardship - Commit to sustainable practices in all developments to protect and preserve the natural environment.
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4.0 Stakeholder engagement

FLS national and regional teams collaborated to reach a wide range of stakeholders during the concept consultation phase.

We created a map and introductory text for stakeholders to respond to (including 16 options to consider), which was available to view online and in person ([Appendix 1](#)). A second, easier to read version was created for children and young people.

Each of the following groups were asked the same questions. Precise wording varied, depending on the audience, but aimed to capture the same feedback:

- What do you like?
- What have we missed?
- What concerns do you have about the proposals?
- What other opportunities are there?
- Who do we need to consult and partner with?
- Do you have any other comments about Dalbeattie Forest?

Pan-South Scotland organisations:

- South of Scotland Enterprise (SOSE), South of Scotland Destination Alliance, National Trust for Scotland (Dumfries & Galloway)

Local authorities:

- Dumfries and Galloway Council

National organisations:

- VisitScotland, British Horse Society Scotland, Developing Mountain Biking in Scotland, Scottish Outdoor Recreation Alliance, The Kennel Club, Sustrans

Local organisations:

- Dalbeattie Community Initiative, Dalbeattie Community Council

Individuals/businesses:

- Members of the public attending in-person drop-in sessions at 71 High Street, Dalbeattie on Friday 22 and Saturday 23 March. Some feedback was fed directly into SurveyMonkey, some was captured on hard copy forms, then transferred to the online version. A number of people annotated maps – these have been saved and included in collated feedback.
- Members of the public (locals, visitors, interested parties) responding online, feeding directly into a Survey Monkey form.
- Young people from Dalbeattie High School Rural Skills course (S5/S6) attended with their teacher
- Shared with Dalbeattie Primary School.



Consultation with young people at Bang Goes DG (STEM event run by Developing Young Workforce)

Stakeholder feedback highlights: round 1

What do you like about the proposal/what other opportunities are there?

- 17% like the idea of multi-use paths; that FLS is actively taking horse-riders into consideration; enhancing the MTB trail offer.
- 12% are keen to enhance the links to the coast.
- 10% expressed the importance of linking to Rocks and Wheels.
- 9% of respondents also liked links to the community, facilities for children and families, improvements to car parks and bouldering.

The greatest opportunities were seen to be Mark Hill (11%), enhanced black, red and downhill MTB trails (10%) and café/bike hire/shop (9%). It's worth noting that Rocks and Wheels will have a café and bike hire/shop in the town.

There were a range of other opportunities identified, mostly to do with links to local facilities/businesses/organisations, maintenance and reinstatement of trails and information/signage provision.

What have we missed?

- 12% thought we'd missed out Moyle Hill.
- 10% said there wasn't enough consideration of singletrack, flowing MTB trails.
- 9% thought there wasn't enough information about the safety consequences of multi-use trails.

Other notable missing topics include: skills/rider progression (8%); horse-friendly tracks (7%); wildlife, green and blue MTB trails (6% each); signage/interpretation, Heart Stane access, horse car park, viewpoints, maintenance, technical trails (5% each).

What concerns do you have about the proposals?

- 30% are concerned about the safety of the multi-use trails.
- 14% about the quality, maintenance and construction of the MTB trails.
- 8% worry about elements of sustainable forestry, wildlife and environment, plus funding and timescales.

- 7% about prioritising the needs of local people, waymarking/signage.
- 6% lack of skills progression and the dilution of Dalbeattie as a trail centre.
- 5% lack of horse-specific facilities, suitable surfaces for horses and the connection/access to Dalbeattie town (especially the safety and speed at Rocks and Wheels).

Who do we need to consult and partner with?

Stakeholders suggested around 40 groups or organisations with whom they thought we should work. While we are already in contact with many of them, there are a number of interesting new contacts on the list, particularly targeting the horse riding community.

We also asked a final 2 questions:

Do you have any other comments about the proposal?

Do you have any other comments about Dalbeattie Forest?

The responses varied immensely and have been fed mostly into 'concerns' or 'opportunities'.



Community consultations

**Stakeholder feedback: round 2 (June 2024)**

We amended the potential options for Dalbeattie and Mark Hill, building on the first tranche of stakeholder feedback ([Appendix 2](#)).

Following a national and regional FLS team discussion, we started asking our external stakeholders for their feedback. This comprised:

- One key stakeholder joint Teams meeting.
- 2 days public drop-in sessions at Dalbeattie Community Initiative on 14 and 15 June.
- Staff members attending the Colvend Community Council meeting on 24 June.
- Various email submissions and individual video meetings (e.g. NTS, Kennel Club, VisitScotland).

For the online survey, the questions were simplified for round 2, asking the same 3 questions for each visual:

- a/ What do you like?
- b/ What do you not like?
- c/ Any other comments

We received responses from 182 people via Survey Monkey. We have carried out thorough thematic analyses of each question ([Appendix 2](#)), which can be summarised as follows:

Key findings from thematic analysis

- Positive feedback: respondents generally appreciated the diversity and maintenance of trails, the scenic and peaceful environment, accessibility and the presence of wildlife and historical elements.
- Common concerns: issues frequently mentioned included; inadequate signage, parking, and facilities; concerns about environmental impact and invasive species; and the need for better maintenance and management of trails and natural habitats.

5.0 Needs analysis

5.1 Assessment of the current facilities and offering

Walking trails

Birch Trail

Easy trail grade - 1 mile / 1.6 km - Allow 1/2 hours

Scenic short wide firm surfaced gravel loop which winds through lots of birch and mossy pines. Gentle wander with plenty of stop and sit opportunities and some sculptures to look out for. Throughout all the trails there are opportunities to spot small golden hedgehog sculptures.

Plantain Loch Trail

Strenuous trail grade 1 3/4 miles / 2.9 km - Allow 1 hour

Lovely firm gravel surfaced walk meanders between the mixed woodland and along the tranquil shores of Plantain Loch. Path is in good condition, there are

several short steep slopes and one rough rocky section. Look out for wildlife: ducks, geese, red squirrels, grey herons or dragonflies. Halfway round there is a totem pole, it's beginning to rot and probably needs removed now. On the return there are lovely views over the loch.

Quarry Loch Trail

Strenuous trail grade - 2 1/4 miles / 3.7 km - Allow 1 1/2 hours

Mostly firm gravel track with a rough narrow rocky section through trees and some muddy patches. Quite a steep slope down to the quarries. Discover Dalbeattie's granite quarrying heritage at the top, where oak and beech mingle with the pine trees. There are dramatic outcrops of granite all along the route.

MTB trails

Ironhash Trail

Grade – Green: Easy – 7 1/4 miles / 11.5 km

Provides an easy ride deep into the heart of the forest, mainly on forest roads with one section through mixed woodland. It's ideal for getting a flavour of mountain biking. Quite a few clear sections now throughout the route with no trees due to windblow/larch extraction, although not really any open views. Trail in generally good condition, but some felling ongoing. Mostly easy flattish going, followed by a short uphill climb to high point. Good introduction for beginners or children.

Moyle Hill Trail

Grade – Blue: Moderate – 8 3/4 miles / 14.4 km

Currently closed because of windblow

A fun trail which delivers some great views through mature conifer forest and mixed broadleaves. Recently more views and open sections have been opened up due to windblow and larch removal. It's an ideal introduction to the 7stanes with a nice mix of singletrack, forest road and the granite rock that Dalbeattie is famed for. There are sections with rocks and roots, plus some steady uphill climbs – all rewarded with beautiful views from the top of the Urr estuary.

Hardrock Trail

Grade – Red: Difficult – 15 1/2 miles / 25.0 km

A challenging route with rougher and rockier surfaces. The trail is less enclosed after windblow and larch removal with some views to Solway coast opened up now. It follows miles of singletrack with some challenging features along the way. There are optional black-graded sections if you feel like testing your technical ability. The Slab is a standout feature – this section of sheer granite lies at a steep angle and offers a thrilling experience. There is no real view from the Heart Stane destination, which is a disappointment.

Blue, Red taster loops and skills area

There are two taster loops, both begin from the trail starts with a then easy transition onto the main trails. Both well used, as is the skills area, and provide very useful introductions to blue and red grades, an indication of your next grade up progression and a place to practise and improve your skills.

Longer-distance trails

Dalbeattie to Colvend trail

This is a route promoted by the council with an information route board at either end. It follows forest road and has directional finger posts. It's not part of

the formal promoted FLS offer but is an important and well used local walk route by locals from Dalbeattie and dog walkers. It was a council initiative to open it and we don't promote it, but we do inspect and maintain it.

Horse riding trails and facilities

There are currently no designed or promoted trails for horse riding other than the forest roads and Multi-User

trails that horse riders can access under SOAC. Although horse riders do access the forest from all sides, the main demand is in the south of the forest further away from the mountain bike trails.

Car park provision

Dalbeattie Forest has two aggregate-surfaced car parks ([Figure 1](#)). Dalbeattie Town Wood (approx. 20 cars) is situated at the South end of Dalbeattie High Street, in the North West corner of the forest and is therefore a very accessible location for anyone starting their forest visit from Dalbeattie. It is widely used by local visitors, especially regular walkers and dog walkers but also attracts visitors wishing to visit the attractive Plantain Loch walk or avoid the busier 7stanes car park. The maps, interpretation boards and information at this car park focus on walking routes.

The Dalbeattie 7stanes (Richorn) car park has spaces for approximately 60 cars in an attractive sectioned and circular-loop setting between trees and the remains of a stone building. It is located around $\frac{3}{4}$ mile from Dalbeattie just off the A710 and is also very accessible with a path linking the two car parks. The first section of the access road in from the A710 is tarmacked giving way to aggregate. The maps, interpretation boards and

information at this car park focus on cycling trails. It is the starting point for the 7stanes mountain biking experience at Dalbeattie and also the taster/skills area. Both car parks are in reasonably good condition with just a few potholes and some damage from recent windblow clearance (June 2024). Both car parks are charging car parks, the tariff at Richorn being slightly higher than Town Wood due to the level of facilities and equality impact considerations.

Mark Hill ([Figure 1](#)) does not have an official car park. There is a small parking area for around two cars near the start of the trails but visitors are encouraged to use public transport for access. This forest has a high local visitor use.

There are a number of informal locations next to the other entrances to the forest where local visitors are parking in laybys, or at the entrance splays of the forest roads – Barnbarroch, Fairgirth layby, Cloak Moss, Aucheninnes Moss and the entrance to Mark Hill from the A710.



Top: Dalbeattie Town Wood car park
Bottom: Dalbeattie 7stanes (Richorn) car park



Top: Mark Hill parking area near start of trails
Bottom: entrance to Mark Hill from the A710 road

Public transport

Dumfries is the nearest railway station, and there are regular buses from Dumfries and Castle Douglas to Dalbeattie (except Sundays). Details can be found at Traveline Scotland.

Active travel

There are regular buses to Dalbeattie from Edinburgh, Glasgow, Carlisle and Dumfries. Depending on the operator, some of these are bike carriers. The start of the visitor journey at Dalbeattie Town Wood car park is a five-minute cycle from the bus stop and Dalbeattie 7stanes is around another 5-10 minute cycle.



There is good pedestrian access to Dalbeattie Town Wood car park from Dalbeattie town centre

Facilities

The 7stanes (Richorn) car park has a modern, timber, gender-neutral compost toilet block with two single stall toilets and one accessible toilet. In addition, there are council-run public toilets in Dalbeattie, Rockcliffe and Sandyhills which are free of charge.

Dalbeattie, with a population of circa 4.3K, has good facilities including a bike shop and hire, a garage, EV charge points and a range of shops, cafes, play and leisure facilities equivalent to towns of similar size. A range of additional facilities, such as indoor bouldering and a pump track, are planned via the Rocks and Wheels Community Initiative Funding to begin development in 2024. There are small shops/convenience stores, pubs and cafes in the surrounding small villages such as Kippford, Colvend and Sandyhills. There is a small café (not FLS) adjoining the 7stanes car park open Friday to Monday all year and longer in the summer.

There is a small natural play park at Dalbeattie Town Wood enjoyed by local and visiting families. Dalbeattie has a fun, spot the golden hedgehog theme in the playpark and around the Town Wood car park area. There is also an attractive stone maze/sculpture at this car park. This play park has suffered from some vandalism and littering due to the proximity to the town.

Just south of the 7stanes car park, at Greenhill Farm ([Figure 1](#)) a local business offers bike hire and other leisure activities. There's also a café with access by foot and bike from the car park.

There is one livery yard at Greenhill and one riding stables adjacent to Dalbeattie Forest Barend. Greenhill offer a Horse Welcome Scheme to bring your horse on holiday with you.

Accommodation

A range of accommodation is on offer in Dalbeattie and the nearby communities, catering to the different tastes and budgets of visitors.

Though there are a couple of hotels located in Dalbeattie itself, additional hotels can also be found in the vicinity: one in Kippford and one in Colvend. There are a few B&Bs scattered throughout Dalbeattie and the surrounding area, which is well-served by self-catering accommodation. This takes the form of both holiday cottages and caravan parks, including holiday parks in Kippford, Rockcliffe, Southernness and Sandyhills. There

is a variety of touring caravan and tent pitches or static caravan hire available. Glamping pods are also available at a couple of locations.

Future potential accommodation options include the community project, Rocks and Wheels, which is intending a 60-bed self-catering hostel as part of its proposals for an outdoor activity centre.

As above, there is existing Horse Welcome accommodation adjoining Dalbeattie Forest.

5.2 Visitor demographics

Progressive Partnership, a market research company, were commissioned to undertake user research for the 7stanes centres in 2022.

The on-line survey was self-completion and self-selecting which means the sample should not be taken as representative of all visitors to Dalbeattie. It may however indicate which groups were most motivated to be involved in the discussion about the future of Dalbeattie Forest.

Summary of demographics from the Dalbeattie survey (188 responses)

Those visiting Dalbeattie as their most recent trip were most likely to be:

- Men (64%)
- From socio-economic groups AB (57%)
- Aged 45-59 (45%)
- White (91%)
- Without long-term health conditions, disabilities or infirmities (77%)
- From Scotland (61%)
- Have no children under 16 in the household (57%)

Gender

The respondents were 64% male : 29% female, which is not necessarily representative of all visitors but does align with the gender profile of respondents from the other 7stanes centres.

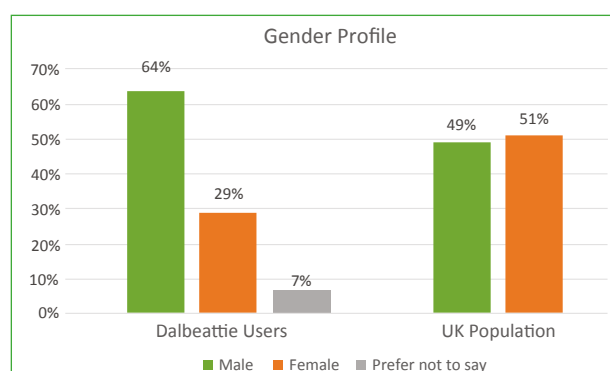


Figure 2: column chart showing Dalbeattie and UK gender profiles.

Age

60% of respondents were aged 35-54, similar to the overall 7stanes figure of 59%.

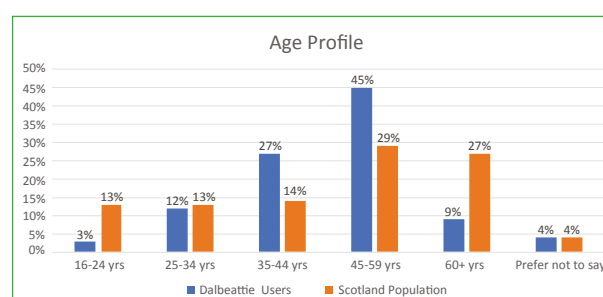


Figure 3: column chart showing age profile of respondents compared to Scotland population.

Socio-economic groups (SEG)

Socio-economic groups are based on data on a person's main type of activity, occupation, occupational status and industry.

More than half of the respondents were from SEG – AB which reflects the respondents from the other 7stanes centres.

Socio-economic Grading Table

Grade	Definition	Newcastle Users	Scotland Population
AB	Higher and intermediate managerial, administrative and professional occupations	57%	19%
C1	Supervisory, clerical, and junior managerial, administrative and professional occupations	19%	31%
C2	Skilled manual occupations	19%	24%
DE	Semi-skilled and unskilled manual occupations, unemployed and lowest grade occupations	5%	26%

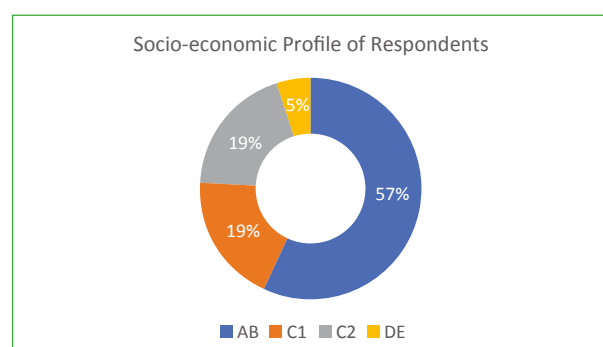


Figure 4: table giving description of each social grade and showing SEG for Dalbeattie users.

Ethnicity

91% of respondents were white, which aligns with the responses from the other 7stanes centres.

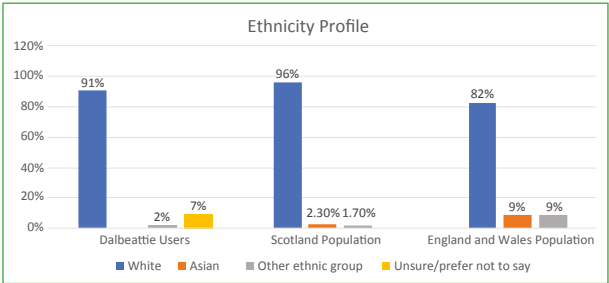


Figure 5: column chart showing ethnicity profile of respondents compared to Scotland and England & Wales populations.

Health

13% had a physical or mental health condition or illness lasting 12 months or more.

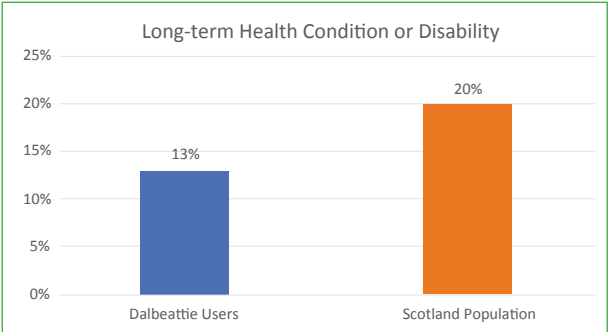


Figure 6: column chart showing percentage of Dalbeattie users with a long-term health condition or disability compared to Scotland population.

Currently live

61% of respondents were from Scotland; however 34% were from England, which is higher than the average of all 7stanes centres which is 21%.

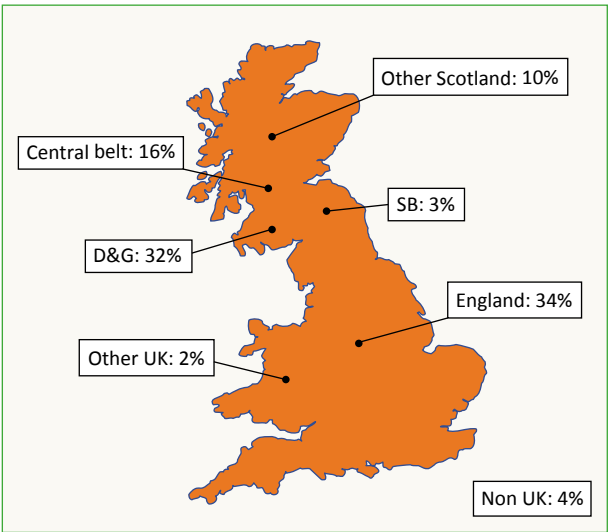


Figure 7: map of UK showing where Dalbeattie users live.

Family life cycle

Of the 43% who had children under 16 in their household: 20% were under 5 yrs, 54% were 5-12 yrs and 45% were 13-16 yrs.

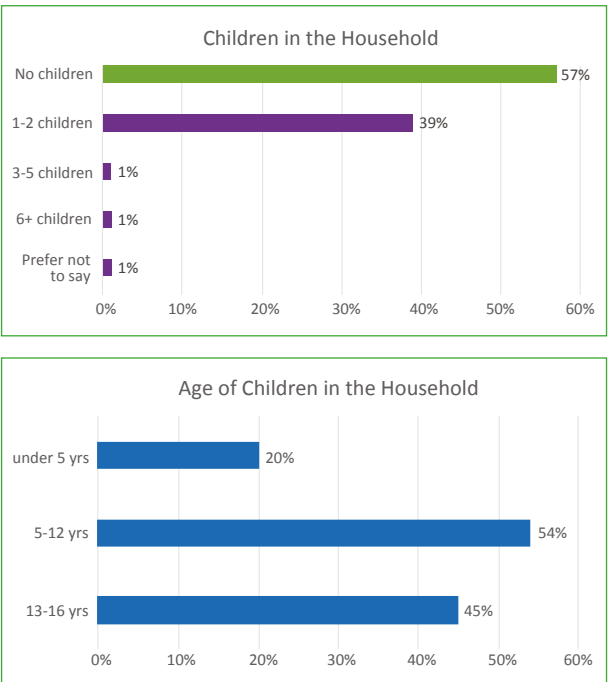


Figure 8: bar charts showing number of children in the household and age of children in the household.

5.3 Target audiences

FLS uses a behavioural segmentation model to group visitors. This is the process of sorting and grouping visitors based on the behaviours they exhibit. Using the FLS model, the following target audiences have been identified for Dalbeattie:-

1. Adventure Seekers
2. Family Groups
3. Easy Recreationalists

Adventure Seekers

Adventure Seekers are looking for an active trip where they can enjoy outdoor activities that energise them. They are most likely to visit in pairs or small groups and are generally visiting without children for a short to medium break and are looking for mid-range accommodation.

Challenges with this group:

- Lack of knowledge about the range of activities available
- Put off by unreliable weather

Family Groups

Family groups are looking for safe outdoor environments with a range of options and good amenities. They are most likely to plan visits carefully in advance and take recommendations from family and friends. Looking for good accommodation.

Challenges with this group:

- Balancing the different needs of all family members

Easy Recreationalists

Easy Recreationalists are looking for relaxation, fresh air and easy exercise experiences. They are most likely to be return visitors and like easy trails and good scenery. May have their own motorhome.

Challenges with this group:

- Encouraging them to visit new places, not just their favourite.

Behaviour characteristic	Purpose of visit	Looking for	Likes	Avoids / dislikes	Most likely to:
Adventure Seekers	• An active holiday/trip • Having fun • Escape the weekday life	• A challenge, but with controlled risk • Information & inspiration about outdoor activities • Good signposting • Mid-range accommodation • Value for money • Good café/pub	• Living life to the full • A sense of adventure • Trying new things • Seeing new places • Suggestions for other well planned activities	• Easy trails	• Living life to the full • A sense of adventure • Trying new things • Seeing new places • Suggestions for other well planned activities
Family Groups	• An active break where they can enjoy the outdoors as a family • Their trip will leave them feeling energised, exhausted and wanting to go back • To create happy memories	• Lots of space and a mix of outdoor things to do • Safe, clean & welcoming environment with good amenities e.g. parking, toilets, cafes, picnic tables • Accurate 'how to get there' information • Good accommodation • Value for money & free activities • Good photo opportunities • Buggy friendly locations and activities	• Well-presented options, services and choices • Mountain biking and other outdoor activities • To pack a lot into their holiday • To know what's in store - predictability • Information about other local facilities/activities	• Activities that are too risky • Hassle – disjointed services and options • Closed facilities • Dirty / vandalised facilities	• Plan carefully in advance • Visit during school holidays & at weekends • New & existing visitors • Be regular outdoor visitors • Take recommendations from family & friends • Spend money locally on food/accommodation
Easy Recreationalists	• Relaxation • Fresh air • A bit of exercise	• Well maintained facilities • Good directions & parking • Opportunities to connect with wildlife and nature • Easy to access activities	• Easy trails • Good scenery • Clear information and options • Age appropriate content	• Strenuous walking • Crowds	• Be return visitors • Local to the area • Have favourite places • Have a campervan • Generate word of mouth: good or bad

Figure 9: table showing the full behavioural characteristics of the audience segments.

6.0 Market analysis

6.1 Trends in mountain biking and the wider activity sector

Mountain biking has broadened to include cross country, downhill, gravel cycling, Enduro and trials, etc. Bikes have improved suspension, braking, tyre technology and e-bike motors, enabling them to negotiate more extreme terrain. These developments are increasing the accessibility of this activity.

The term mountain bike is increasingly less accurate as the sport and activity now has an established set of sub-segments with identifiable consumers, trails and cycles. The technology improvements have also helped to promote sub-sector specialisation that combines trails with cycles, e.g. gravel trails and e-bikes. The latter has the potential for significant growth particularly with more mature and wealthier audiences.

Data on the appeal of the sector is identified in the GB resident overnight trips data and spend for activities that were part of their visit to Scotland.

In 2019, GB domestic overnight visitors took 290,000 trips, where adventure sports were part of the trip, contributing £112 million in expenditure. Other activities that were part of a trip included:

- Mountain biking which constitutes some 166,000 trips
- Road cycling which constituted some 193,000 trips

However, walking and hiking remained by far the most popular activity with 1.6 million trips involving a long walk, hike or ramble (more than 2 miles). Some 2.7 million trips involved a short walk or stroll (up to 2 miles or 1 hour). For this reason, a mixed portfolio of recreation offers should be part of the 7stanes development.

The GB Travel Survey data below provides the source material and offers useful comparison material.

GBTS 2019 - All activities undertaken on trip to Scotland			
	Trips (Millions)	Nights (Millions)	Spend (£millions)
All tourism - 2019	13.810	46.413	£3,200
Short walk/stroll – up to 2 miles/1 hour	2.679	11.742	£848
Long walk, hike or ramble (minimum of 2 miles/1 hour)	1.602	7.287	£534
Swimming (indoors or outdoors)	0.801	3.481	£240
Cycled – on a road/surfaced path	0.193	0.789	£93
Boating/sailing/water sports - inland (e.g. canoeing, motor boat, canal boating)	0.097	0.464	£60.80
Boating/sailing/water sports - on or by the sea (e.g. canoeing, surfing, jet ski)	0.235	0.882	£99
Running, jogging, orienteering	0.594	2.228	£211
Mountain biking	0.166	0.928	£45
Horse riding, The GB Travel Survey pony trekking	0.249	0.743	£61
Adventure sports (e.g. skiing, snowboarding, rafting, canyoning)	0.290	1.114	£112

GB Travel Survey 2019 Trips, Nights and Expenditure related to activities (Source: UKTS 2020).

In terms of wider activity trends, VisitScotland and other research sources confirmed that:

- Adventure Tourism remains a catalyst for recovery post-COVID;
- Both soft and hard adventure tourism have shown increased popularity. Hard adventure generally refers to high risk activities that require some training or experience before undertaking. Examples would include rock climbing, ice climbing and caving, etc. Soft adventure is relatively safe and requires limited experience or training. Examples of soft adventure would include safari, kayaking and fishing, etc. This is due to greater interest in the outdoors, health and the popularity of activities such as cycling, running and open water swimming;
- In Scotland, Adventure Tourism has real potential to drive economic benefit;
- Such trends will hopefully contribute to improvements in well-being and recreation opportunities for local residents;
- The growth in domestic (UK) tourism (staycations) provides opportunities for communities to display their credentials as these host destination(s) may be seen as a location for adventure tourism. However, this must be caveated by respect for the environment(s) for all to enjoy.

Figure 10: table showing activities on trip to Scotland.

The key relevant developing Adventure Sports trends include:

- Personalisation and packaging of offers often in collaboration with other suppliers to provide a 'total package' for consumers to easily purchase.
- The importance of authenticity, allowing relevant destinations to reflect values that are helping to shape the future of travel and tourism.
- The importance of families as key domestic consumer groups who are increasingly wanting both hard and soft activities.
- The importance of engagement and marketing through electronic communication and social media.
- The importance of personalisation in communications and sales.

In more mainstream publications; Conde Nast ([10 trends that will shape travel in the future | CN Traveller](#)) noted the important growth of what they termed 'rough cycling', (which incorporates gravel cycling and e-bikes) as an important growth trend.

The Scottish Household Survey (2022) records 12% of people participating in cycling (at least of 30 minutes' duration); this is the same as in 2019. Participation is greater amongst educated, middle income groups.

Although UK and Scottish policies favour sport and active lifestyles for all, there is still potential for significant improvement. The Statista Cycling in the UK report (2020) recorded trends previously identified by FLS on cycling and mountain biking. Most notably:

- The growth in sales and value of new bikes in the UK (2007-2020).
- The growth in expenditure on bicycles 2011-2021.
- The growth in participation in cycling as a leisure activity by individuals and families for leisure purposes.

These statistics must be treated with care. The figures do not take into account multiple cycle ownership, therefore linking cycle sales with increased participation may not be accurate.

6.2 Benchmarking against similar destinations

The 7stanes face increased competition from other providers in both Scotland and more widely in the UK.

Competitor benchmarks

- [Bike Park Wales](#)
- [Tarland Trails](#)
- [Whinlatter](#) in the English Lake District

In these destinations the importance of a customer focused approach to managing the facilities and highly effective marketing is clear. The ability of these destinations to appeal to a wide range of cyclists, as well as to other leisure customers, is also evident. Also notable is the marketing focus towards families and those new to cycling, plus an emphasis on care and maintenance of trails.

The following competitor benchmarks are also highlighted as they are rural and offer more than just mountain biking:

- [Glenlivet Estate](#)
- [Laggan Wolftrax](#)
- [Cairngorms](#)
- [Kielder Forest](#)

It would be inaccurate to group all mountain bikers together as the diversity of current demand has potential benefits for the future development of the 7stanes. The growth of gravel, e-bikes etc. has happened since the original development of the 7stanes and holds part of the necessary response to increased development. Facilities that focus on family and mixed ability user groups will contribute to growth and broadening of appeal.

6.3 Gap analysis

Performing a gap analysis for visitor facilities and services at Dalbeattie involved assessing the current state of trails and infrastructure, and identifying the gaps between the current offer and the offer required to meet the objectives outlined below.

6.3.1 Objectives and standards:

The agreed objectives for Dalbeattie Forest are to:

1. Enhance accessibility - improve infrastructure to create opportunities for all abilities and ages.
2. Diversify visitor activities - expand recreation options to include hiking, nature watching and family-friendly activities.

3. Community and tourism integration - develop initiatives to strengthen community involvement and foster tourism growth.
4. Financial sustainability - implement strategies to ensure long-term financial viability, foster partnerships for investment and support.
5. Environmental stewardship - commit to sustainable practices in all developments to protect and preserve the natural environment.

Key areas for analysis:

Signage
Trails network
Horse access
Car parks
Toilet facilities
Play area

6.3.2 Summary of facilities

Signage

Some on-site panels are out of date and would benefit from replacement.

Walking trails

There are currently 3 x strenuous and 1 x easy walking trails.

MTB trails

There is currently a green, blue and red mountain bike trail. There is also a blue and red taster loop and skills area.

Dalbeattie to Colvend Coastal Trail

This is a route promoted by the council and it's not part of the formal promoted FLS offer.

Car park provision

Dalbeattie Forest has two car parks, Town Wood and Richorn, which is the 7stanes car park. Both are accessed off the busy A710.

Toilet facilities

Richorn car park has toilet facilities open all year round. The toilets have 2 standard cubicles and 1 disabled with baby changing cubicle.

Car park provision

There is a well-used adventure play area at the Town Wood car park.

6.3.3 Benchmarking criteria for evaluating facilities and services

Condition of trails

The walking trails surfaces are gravel. Some sections can get muddy and would benefit from drainage maintenance. There is also some washout on slopes, which is difficult to repair.

Accessibility

Access and trail options for horse use and public transport and active travel options are currently limited (see active travel section).

The only easy access trail at Plantain Loch is not suitable for wheelchairs and buggies.

User experience

The Heart Stane is situated on the challenging Hardrock Trail which makes it inaccessible for many visitors. There's also no real view from the Heart Stane destination, which is a disappointment.

Usage levels

The current users of Dalbeattie Forest are predominately male (64%), aged 45-59 (45%) and more than half are from the socio-economic grades AB.

Gap assessment

This assessment compares the standard and range of current Dalbeattie Forest facilities with the desired standards required to meet the five objectives outlined earlier.

Walking trails

To be welcoming to all visitors, consider short all-ability trails, suitable for wheelchairs and buggies.

Multi-User trail

Multi-User trail options should also be considered to broaden the appeal of Dalbeattie Forest and improve access to Moyle Hill and the Heart Stane and links with Kippford.

MTB Blue & Red routes

Over half of the trails currently run on forest roads, so create more off-road sections to make the trails safer and more accessible. Focus on areas that multiple user groups can share and shorter loops to allow for sessioning.

Long-distance route

The addition of a loop connecting all the entrance points within Dalbeattie Forest to the wider trail network should be considered.

The existing coastal path between Portling, Rockcliffe and Kippford is beautiful, especially combined with the forests at Mark Hill and Dalbeattie Forest. Could a range of circular routes be created? There are opportunities to improve public road safety for visitors, especially at Colvend and Drumburn.

Horse access

Additional dedicated horse-box parking and trails designed and promoted for horse riding should be considered. Facilities such as mounting blocks could be added or horse riding groups given permission to create features such as jumps in a dedicated area.

Car parks

To welcome more visitors, there is the potential to extend the car parks at Town Wood and Richorn.

Toilet facilities

To be welcoming for all visitors, an accessible toilet development could be considered at Town Wood car park.

Play area

To encourage more families, there is the potential to extend the play park at Town Wood car park.

Accommodation

To encourage visitors to stay longer in the area, consider the options for developing accommodation provision.

7.0 Environment and heritage

Environmental considerations

Protecting ancient woodland

Detailed plans need to safeguard the ancient woodland sites within the forest. Any development or infrastructure improvements should avoid impacting these ecologically valuable areas.

Biodiversity

Maintaining and enhancing biodiversity is a priority. The framework should consider how to promote habitat diversity, protect key species (such as red squirrels), and minimise disturbance to wildlife.

Water quality

Protecting the water quality of streams and water bodies within the forest is crucial. Development should aim to minimise runoff and pollution.



Landscape impact

Any new visitor facilities or infrastructure should be designed to minimise visual impact on the landscape and be sympathetic to the forest setting.

Built heritage considerations

Archaeological sites

The forest contains several archaeological sites, including prehistoric settlements and historic settlements. The framework should ensure that these sites are protected and, where appropriate, interpreted for visitors.

Historic structures

There are a number of historic structures within the forest, such as old buildings and bridges. These

structures should be conserved and, where possible, incorporated into the visitor experience.

Cultural heritage

The forest has a rich cultural heritage, including its association with the granite industry. The framework should consider how to interpret this heritage for visitors and promote understanding of the forest's history.

Integrating these considerations

Zoning

Define zones within the forest for different types of visitor use, ensuring that sensitive areas are protected from high-impact activities.

Design

Develop visitor facilities and infrastructure that are sensitive to the environment and built heritage, using sustainable materials and minimizing visual impact.

Interpretation

Provide information and interpretation for visitors about the forest's environment, biodiversity, and cultural heritage.

Monitoring

Establish a monitoring program to assess the impact of visitor use on the environment and built heritage, and adapt management practices as needed.

By carefully considering these environmental and built heritage factors, the investment framework can ensure that the visitor experience at Dalbeattie Forest and Mark Hill is both enjoyable and sustainable, preserving the forest for future generations.

8.0 Framework concept

8.1 Trail network development

Mountain Bikers in Dumfries and Galloway represent around 8% of forest visitors. It is important that the future trail network works for both mountain bikers

and the other 92% of visitors to the area. The potential trails network proposed contain a mixture a dedicated mountain bike trails, but also Multi-User and long-distance trails suitable for a broad range of user groups.

8.1.1 Long distance trails

Dalbeattie Forest Loop: a 11-mile loop primarily for walkers and cyclists, utilising existing forest roads and the core path. It will provide access to all trails and a potential link with coastal connections for a longer loop.

- Purpose: improve connectivity within the forest and offer a clear, waymarked route.
- Considerations: route planning, signage, and potential expansion to include a coastal connection.

Coastal connection: enhancements to the existing coastal path between Portling, Rockcliffe, and Kippford.

- Purpose: create a more appealing circular route by incorporating Mark Hill and Dalbeattie Forests.
- Considerations: safety improvements at road crossing points, route planning to offer different length options, and integration with existing access points.

Gateways: enhancements to the visibility and accessibility of multiple entry points to Dalbeattie Forest.

- Purpose: encourage usage of various access points, improve navigation, and enhance the visitor experience.
- Considerations: signage, information provision (both on-site and online), and potential infrastructure improvements.

8.1.2 Multi-User trails

Moyle Hill Multi-User Trail: a new trail from Richorn car park to Moyle Hill and the Heart Stane.

- Purpose: improve access to historical site and popular 'Heart Stane' sculpture for walkers, cyclists, and horse riders.
- Considerations: trail design to protect the Moyle Hill Scheduled Ancient Monument, consultation with Historic Environment Scotland, and accessibility for various user groups.

Richorn Multi-User Trail: a 2.5-mile trail with optional technical features.

- Purpose: provide a varied experience for different user types and skill levels.
- Considerations: inclusion of rest stops and play areas, accessibility for all visitors, and careful planning of gradients and surfacing.

Mark Hill Multi-User Trail: a 5-mile loop through Mark Hill Forest.

- Purpose: provide a peaceful and quiet trail experience with potential links to Kippford and the coastal viewpoint.
- Considerations: route planning, potential wildlife viewing opportunities, and integration with existing viewpoints and paths.

8.1.3 All ability Trails

Aucheninnes Moss Loop: a short, all-ability loop through mixed woodland.

- Purpose: offer a different experience from the structured Dalbeattie Forest, suitable for all visitors.
- Considerations: trail design to support cattle grazing and wildlife habitats, potential parking development, and linkages with the Spycraig Loop.

Plantain Loch: a 1-mile accessible loop around Plantain Loch.

- Purpose: enhance the visitor experience and provide access to this special feature for all, including wheelchair and buggy users.
- Considerations: route planning, inclusion of picnic areas and rest points, and opportunities for wildlife viewing.

8.1.4 Mountain bike trails

Spycraig Quarries MTB Loop: a waymarked blue mountain bike trail.

- Purpose: offer a shorter, easier option for mountain bikers.
- Considerations: trail design, potential linkages to the Rocks and Wheels project, and utilisation of existing desire lines.

Modifications to existing MTB Trails: improvements to the current blue and red mountain bike trails.

- Purpose: enhance the mountain biking experience, create more off-road sections, and provide options for different skill levels.
- Considerations: trail design to accommodate multiple user groups, inclusion of shorter loops and "opt-in" features, and providing alternative routes around challenging features.

Skills area: improvements to the mountain bike skills area could provide a stand-alone attraction at the 7stanes car park supporting youth groups, skills development and compliment the community cycling development plans.

8.1.5 Horse riding

Horse Loop: a dedicated loop for horse riders.

- Purpose: provide a safe and enjoyable route for horse riding, potentially connecting with local “Horses Welcome” style schemes.
- Considerations: route planning to include cantering sections, signage, access points, horse box parking at Richorn and potential connections with other trails and stables.

8.1.6 Trail design principles for all trail types

1. Trails should be built with an ‘invest to save’ principle, to ensure the long term financial sustainability of the trail network. Material choice and design features should be chosen to minimise future costs. Whole life-cycle cost modelling should be based on a maintenance schedule of 25 years.
2. Trails should be built considering long-term impacts of climate change, with the expectation that we will experience more extreme storm events. Drainage needs to be designed with 1 in 200-year storm events as a minimum, and where pragmatic should be designed for 1 in 1000-year storm events.
3. The All Ability and Multi-User trails should be built to be as accessible as possible using [Outdoors Accessibility Guidance | Paths for All](#)
4. The long-distance trails will look to predominantly use existing forest roads and trails to ensure best value of the existing network. The long-distance trails should influence woodland future roadside design for improved visitor experience.
5. Any ‘top of grade’ trail features must be designed to be visible to visitors and have a pre-qualifying feature, so that they have no nasty surprises and have the opportunity to choose an alternative route or adjust their speed appropriately.
6. If the Multi-User trail has a steeper faster descent, then consider splitting the route, so that slower users do not come into conflict with faster users.
7. Where possible, as-dug trails or local stone material should be used to reduce the carbon footprint of construction and reduce environmental impact of imported materials.
8. The trails are part of a working commercial forest route and design should consider flexibility to allow forest management and harvesting.
9. The location of trails on the framework are for guidance only and will need ground-truthed based on the above principals and landowner agreement.

8.2 Car parking and transportation

8.2.1 Car parking

Although currently there is no strong demand for increased car parking at Dalbeattie Forest, improvements in the visitor experience as a result of investment by FLS, Community or private operators could see this demand increase quite quickly. We have therefore considered the potential for appropriate car parking expansion within this framework, aligned to the FLS Visitor Strategy. It should be noted that no feasibility or business case has been carried out, this detailed analysis would be required before any development opportunity was progressed.

It is estimated that there is the potential to expand Dalbeattie Town Wood car park by around another 20 spaces either to the east (town side) or west (losing some of the picnic area) or both.

Dalbeattie 7stanes has an estimated potential for more significant expansion either side of the entrance road. To the west/right side, there is the opportunity to create a gated events/overflow car park. Currently (June 2024),



Looking back towards the picnic area at the far end of the Town Wood car park from the access path towards the 7stanes/Richorn car park

there is the advantage that the trees in this area have been felled.

During the concept consultations with the horse community, several new locations were identified for potential horse box parking to help reduce forest user conflict. However, it was assessed that without enforcement controls in place there would be no way

of preventing other recreation users parking in these car parks, creating additional issues. The potential for existing horse businesses to provide chargeable horse box parking as a business opportunity was discussed, but deemed non-viable including bio-security concerns. In any expansion of the 7stanes car park, dedicated horse box parking spaces should be considered in the most suitable location in combination with the Multi-User trail development from this car park.

It is not recommended to develop any further formal parking areas beyond the expansion of the current two car parks due to the high cost of maintenance and risk of anti-social behaviour in more remote/less monitored car parks. In addition, there is a large car park development planned by a private operator at Sandyhills. The development opportunities within this framework have been based on these two car parks remaining the start of the Dalbeattie Forest visitor journey.

8.2.2 Public transport

FLS will continue to work with the Community Council, Scottish Borders Council and SOSE to encourage the maintenance and improvement of these services.

Active travel

In accordance with FLS Corporate and Visitor strategies, FLS promotes the use of active travel throughout its forests and land with the details for each forest location published on its web destination pages.

To support this, an improved entrance is proposed from the town to the forest with a better, more accessible link between the Town Wood and 7stanes car parks. Signage will be improved to better direct mountain bikers to the start of the 7stanes trails and skills area from Dalbeattie. The Multi-User trail approach creates a safe but more exciting experience for mountain bikers from the time they enter the forest.



Section of link path between Dalbeattie Town Wood and Richorn car parks

8.3 Facilities

8.3.1 Toilets

An additional single stall, eco, accessible toilet could be installed at Dalbeattie Town Wood car park along with the expansion/improvement of the play facilities. Careful consideration would need to be given to the cost of ongoing maintenance of this and the vandalism

potential, including fire. There is currently no known demand for increased toilets facilities at the 7stanes car park but further investment and improvements in the forest visitor experience could increase this demand.

It is considered that the facilities already provided by the local authority and private businesses in Kippford and Rockcliffe are sufficient to support Mark Hill.

8.3.2 Bouldering

In addition to the planned accommodation and leisure community development at Dalbeattie, there is potential for some of the granite features within the forest to be developed to create a joined up indoor and outdoor bouldering experience, leading to skills development and expanding opportunity for an outdoor activity business.

Potential rock climbing/bouldering:

Exploration of rock climbing and bouldering development in the old quarry.

- Purpose: Expand recreational opportunities and potentially link with the Rocks and Wheels project.
- Considerations: Site assessment, safety considerations, and potential collaboration with Rocks and Wheels.



Granite features identified for outdoor bouldering area

8.3.3 Horse riding

To support the development of horse box parking at 7stanes and the horse community, features such as mounting blocks could be installed at this car park or other appropriate locations in the forest.

8.3.4 General

The installation of a good quality finger post directing visitors from the 7stanes car park to the nearby café

would improve the visitor experience and support the local economy. This should be in the same style as the wooden finger posts signposting facilities from the Town Wood car park.

FLS supports the provision of dog waste bins at key locations in collaboration with the local community and council, where funding can be sustained. FLS will continue to work closely with the Kennel Club, VisitScotland and other stakeholders regarding dog fouling education campaigns.

8.4 Accommodation

Potential holiday cabin development:

Opportunity to create a holiday cabin site within the forest.

- Purpose: provide accommodation for visitors, generate income to support trail network maintenance.
- Considerations: planning application process, environmental impact assessment, and access arrangements.

There is potential for a development of environmentally sensitive holiday cabins at Mark Hill. This would offer a unique opportunity to enhance the visitor experience in Dalbeattie Forest, while contributing positively to the local economy and the sustainability of the forest itself.

This project aligns perfectly with Forestry and Land Scotland's (FLS) visitor strategy, which emphasizes responsible tourism and conservation. Any development should prioritise integrating the accommodation seamlessly into the natural environment, minimising their impact and preserving the forest's biodiversity. This approach resonates with the growing demand for eco-conscious tourism and complements FLS's dedication to sustainable forest management.

By attracting a different type of visitor, it can diversify the local tourism sector and generate valuable income for FLS. This revenue can then be reinvested back into the forest, supporting the maintenance and improvement of popular amenities like the 7stanes mountain bike trails and walking routes, ultimately benefiting both visitors and the local community.

The community consultation around Kippford, Colvend and Rockcliffe identified several concerns about a potential cabin development at Mark Hill. These concerns are valid and would need to be addressed as part of any planning application. The below table identifies the concerns raised by the community and the studies that would need to be developed as part of any planning application. It is possible that the results of any one study may make the project commercially unviable, so that no planning approval is submitted.

Concerns raised by community over cabin proposal during consultations	Studies to be developed as part of planning application
- Concern over line of site from proposed road junction - Safety of road crossing	- Transportation & Access - Green Travel Plan
Impact of the cabins on the sewage system at Colvend and Kippford	Utilities & Service connection
Visual impact of cabins on neighbouring properties	Landscape & Visual
Impact of the cabins on red squirrel, pine marten and other protected species	- Ecology Survey - Ecologic impact
No issues mentioned by community	Archaeology

Figure 11: studies likely to be included as part of any planning applications.

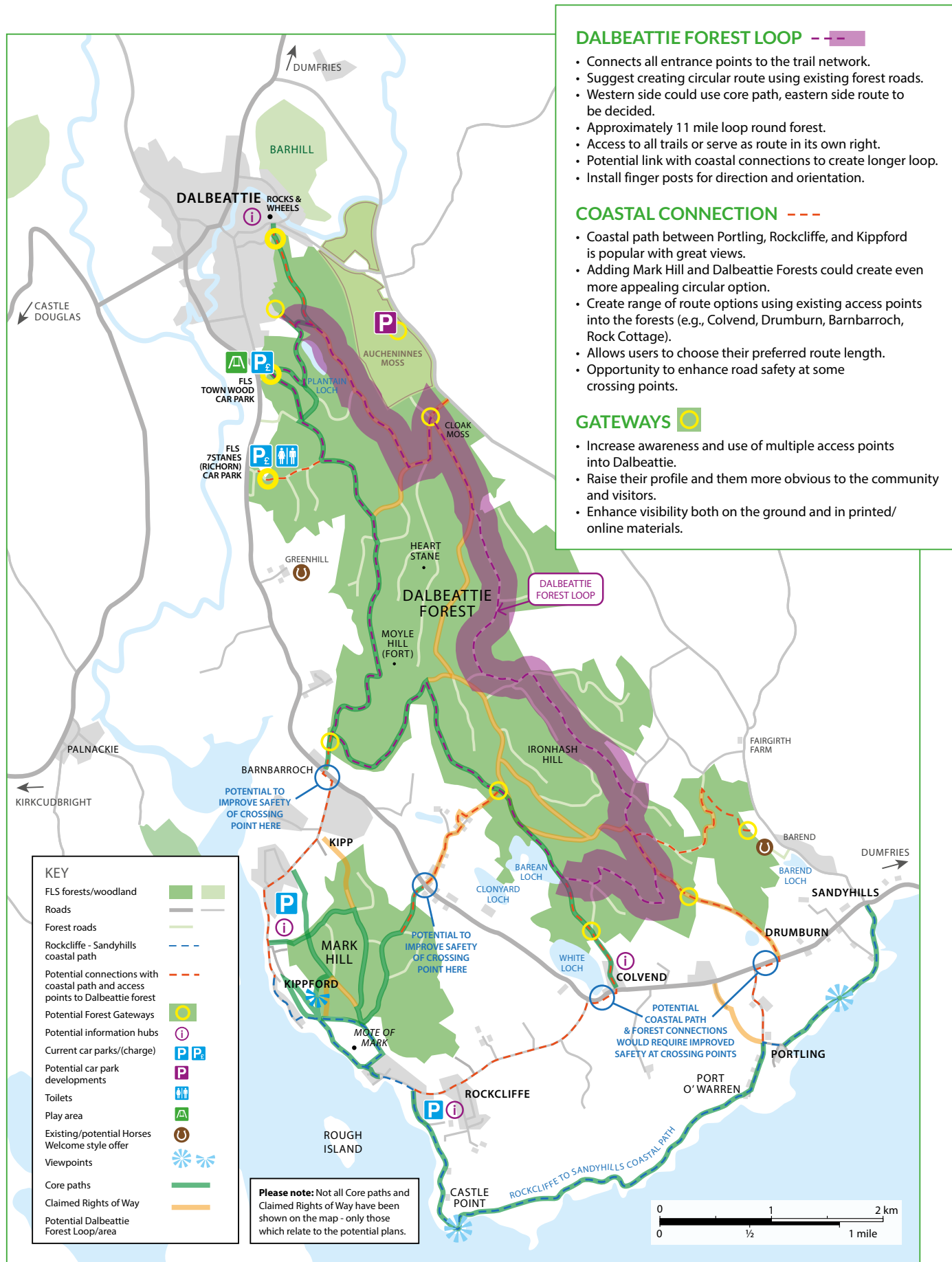
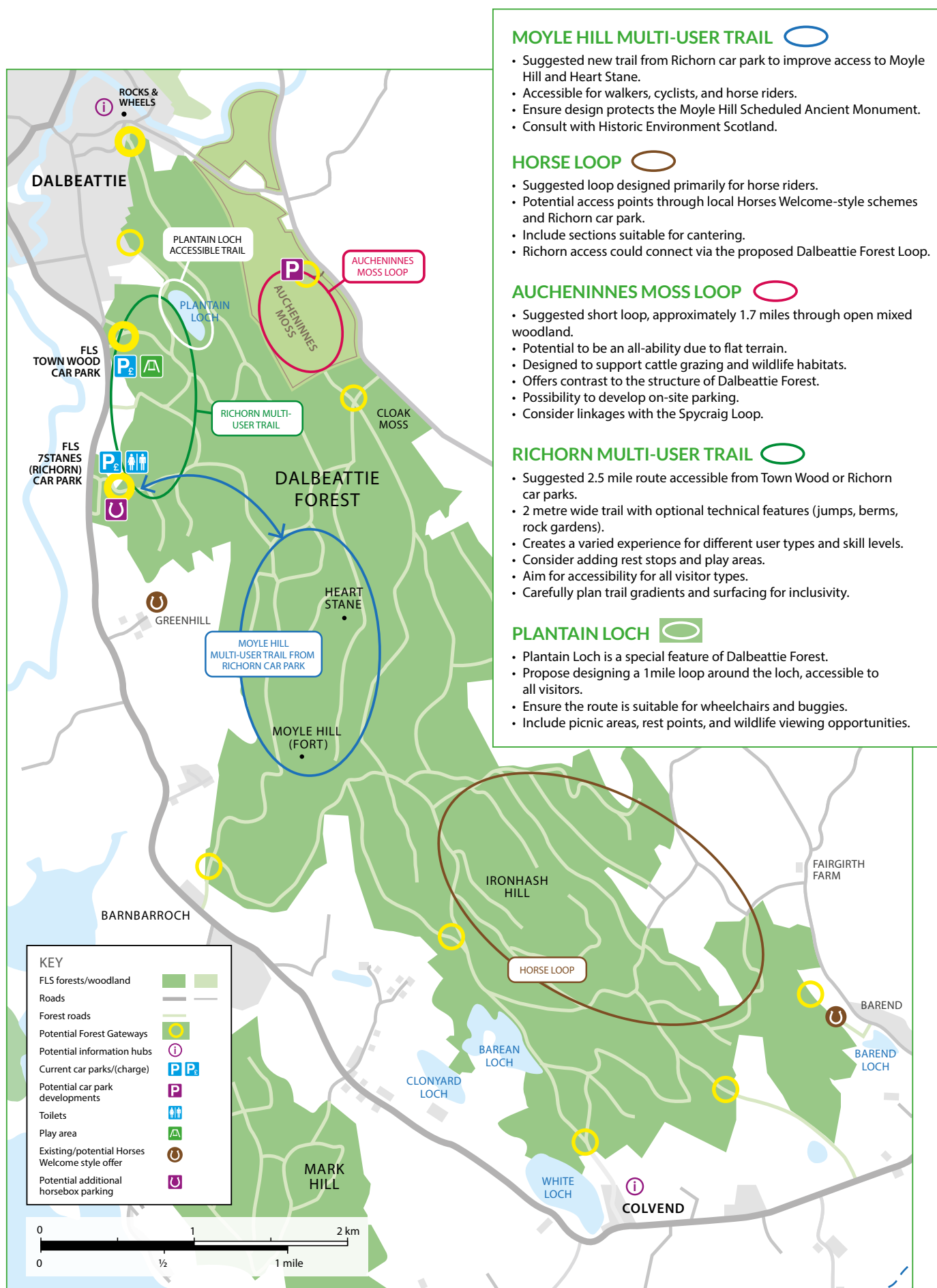


Figure 12: potential long distance routes and connections.



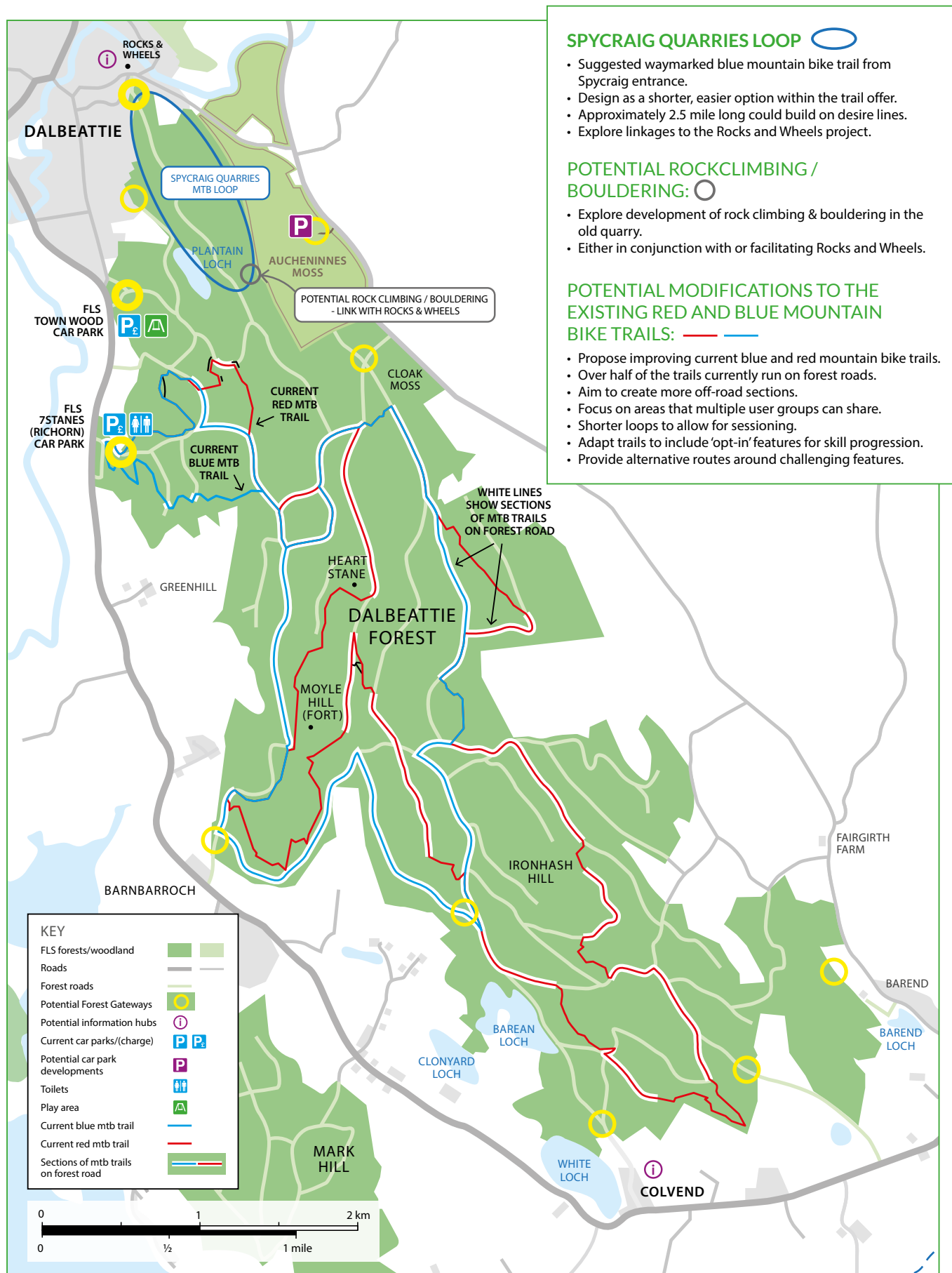


Figure 14: potential mountain bike trail additions and bouldering features.

MARK HILL MUTI-USER TRAIL

- Suggest 5 mile loop through Mark Hill Forest.
- Link with Kippford and the coastal viewpoint at National Trust for Scotland's Muckle Lands.
- Focus on providing a peaceful and quiet experience.
- Potential wildlife viewing opportunities.

ROCK COTTAGE / AUCHENSHEEN / DALBEATTIE FOREST - CLAIMED RIGHT OF WAY

- Utilise the existing claimed right of way linking Mark Hill to Dalbeattie Forest.
- Enhance options for users, including locals seeking variety.
- Encourage longer and more interesting routes through this connection.

POTENTIAL CABIN DEVELOPMENT

- Potential opportunity to create a high quality forest cabin site hidden within the forest for visitors who want to stay for a short break.
- Planning Application would consider impacts on environment, services, road safety and wider economy.
- Income would help support the maintenance of the trail network.
- Access via an existing forest road.

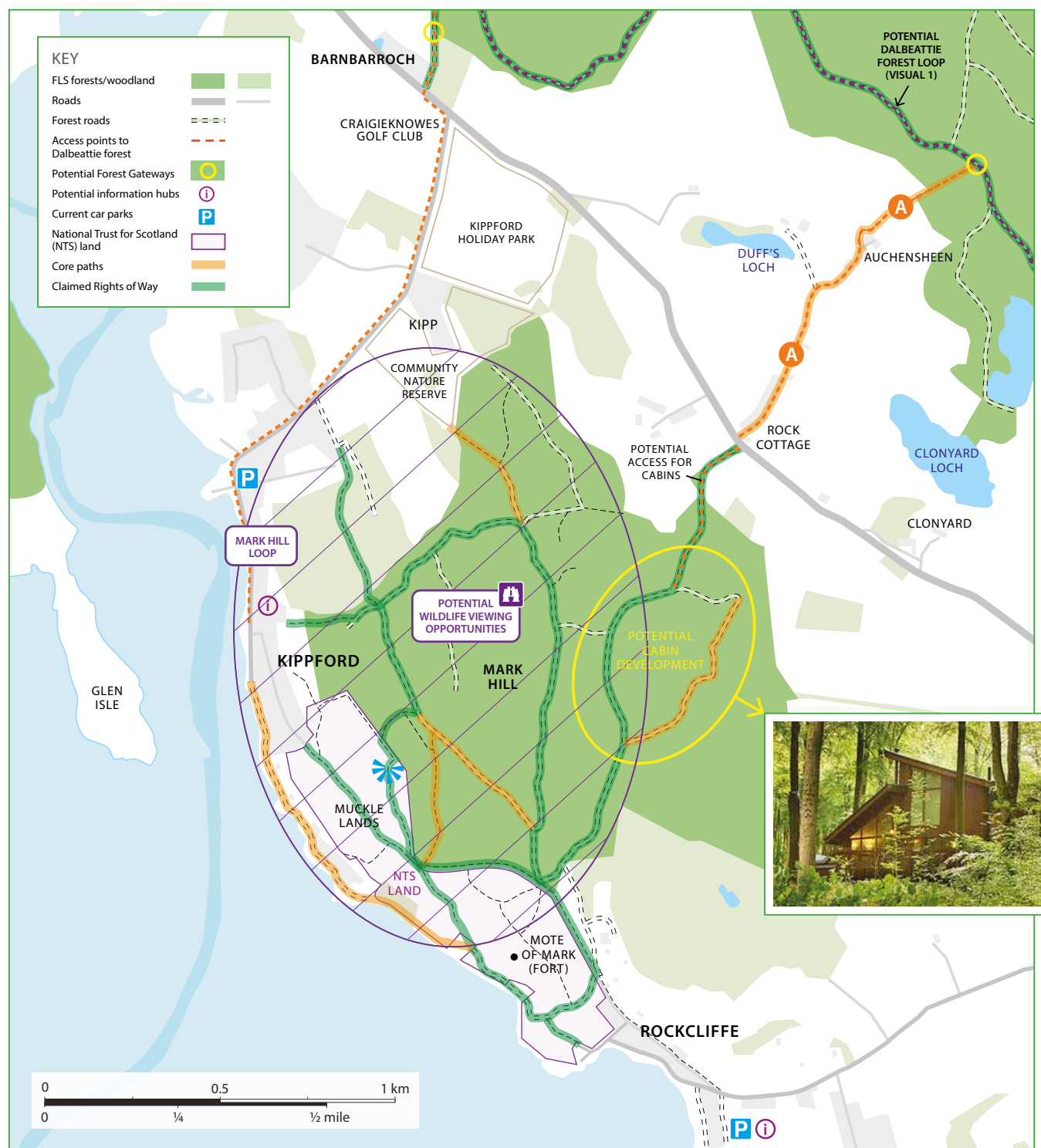


Figure 15: potential Mark Hill trails, connections and developments.

POTENTIAL DALBEATTIE CAR PARK DEVELOPMENT

TOWN WOOD CAR PARK

- ① Current play area - potential to expand
- ② Potential accessible toilet development
- ③ Potential car park extension
- ④ Potential car park extension

RICHORN (7STANES) CAR PARK

- ⑤ Existing café (not FLS) - improve signage
- ⑥ Accessible single stall toilets
- ⑦ Potential car park extension
- ⑧ Potential events/overflow parking
- ⑨ Potential to develop skills area - stand alone attraction
- ⑩ Potential horsebox parking

ADDITIONAL

- ⑪ Develop current link path --- between the two car parks to make it more accessible - widen in parts and reduce some gradients / re-surface

Potential development conceptual only. All approved concepts will be subject to feasibility and business case.



Figure 16: potential Town Wood and 7stanes/Richorn car park developments.

9.0 Investment and funding framework

As outlined in detail in Section 3, this Framework for Visitor Investment seeks to establish a financially sustainable, economically viable range of recreational development opportunities that supports local communities, preserves the environment, and reinvigorates the forest of Dalbeattie into a tourism destination for the future. It aims to support and compliment the economic growth objectives of Scottish Borders Council Economic Strategy 2023 and the South of Scotland Responsible Tourism Strategy and Action Plan 2024, by attracting increased visitor numbers to support local business and creating new tourism and recreation business opportunities.

Availability of funds to progress the development opportunities will be subject to detailed business casing, a sustainable management plan, internal approvals and successful external funding bids. It is anticipated that following successful approvals, approximately £4M will initially be invested at Dalbeattie through the Borderlands Inclusive Growth Deal.

FLS welcomes speculative enquiries from interested parties to develop these ideas and may tender or market some opportunities. Due to the importance of supporting the local economy in Dalbeattie, community consultation is key before any business opportunity is marketed more widely, allowing sufficient time for the local community to consider and note interest.

10.0 Monitoring and evaluation

The Dalbeattie Forest Framework for Visitor Investment will be reviewed regularly by the FLS Visitor Services team consulting partners and community as appropriate. There is no requirement for review updates to be formally published or consulted on.

11.0 Accessibility, contacts and further information

If you need to view this framework in a different format like accessible PDF, large print, easy read, audio recording or braille or would like any further information email: enquiries.south@forestryandland.gov.scot

Appendix 1: list of policy documents and policies

Dumfries and Galloway Council:

[Dumfries and Galloway Local Development Plan](#)
[South of Scotland Regional Economic Strategy](#)
[2021 - 2031](#)

Contact details and further information:

Dumfries and Galloway Council
Council Headquarters
English Street
Dumfries
DG1 2DD

Telephone: 030 3333 3000
Email: contact@dumgal.gov.uk
www.dumgal.gov.uk

Forestry and Land Scotland:

[Corporate Plan](#)
[Business Plan](#)
[Dalbeattie Forest Land Management Plan](#)
[Visitor Strategy](#)
[Community Strategy](#)

Contact details and further information:

Forestry and Land Scotland
Great Glen House
Leachkin Road
Inverness
IV3 8NW

Email: enquiries.south@forestryandland.gov.scot
forestryandland.gov.scot

Key resources:

[National Planning Framework 4](#)
[South of Scotland Responsible Tourism Strategy](#) -
part of the Regional Economic Strategy

Appendix 2: Consultation visuals

FLS National and Regional teams collaborated to reach a wide range of stakeholders during the concept consultation phase. That consultation consisted of:

- Stakeholder workshops
- Community workshops
- Questionnaire

Consultation poster, feedback form and visuals from public consultation 1

Feedback form

Dalbeattie Forest: Visitor Masterplan Concept Consultation Feedback form

There is a concept map and a total of 7 questions. You do not need to respond to all questions and please do not share any personal information.

Link to online concept material and feedback: www.research.net/r/dalbeattieforest

1. What do you like about the proposal?

2. What have we missed?

3. What concerns do you have about the proposal?

Please turn over

Feedback form

4. What other opportunities are there?

5. Who do we need to consult and partner with?

6. Do you have any other comments about the proposal?

7. Do you have any other comments about the Dalbeattie forest?

Thanks for your feedback.
If you have any comments about the content of this survey, please contact fiona.murray@forestryandland.gov.scot

Dalbeattie Forest: Visitor Masterplan Concept Consultation

Have your say at our community consultation events

We know how important Dalbeattie Forest is to the local community and visitors. We intend to work closely with you to improve community well-being and create economic, education and recreation opportunities that benefit both people and environment.

Representatives from our National Visitor Services team will be holding drop in sessions to discuss in-person any queries you may have regarding the ongoing consultation process, answer questions, take feedback and discuss any ideas or concerns.

Drop in sessions will be held on:

Friday 22nd March:
10:00 – 18:00

Saturday 23rd March:
09:30 – 13:30

Dalbeattie Community Initiative
71 High Street
Dalbeattie
DG5 4AA

The concept material and feedback questionnaire may also be accessed online via: www.research.net/r/dalbeattieforest

Concept consultation

DRAFT

Dalbeattie Forest: Visitor Masterplan Concept Consultation

What is the Master Plan Concept for?

The map provided is part of a concept for the eventual master plan. The master plan objective is to look long term at how the forest can contribute to the wider tourism market.

The 'concept' is designed to give a sense of direction of the key ideas we want to explore in detail, as part of the final master plan. Some of the ideas may prove to be impossible when we look at the constraints. The concept plan is to gather support and concerns, at an early stage, and also to see if there are other ideas we should explore. Once the concept is agreed, more detailed survey work and analysis will be conducted. We are seeking views on the concept.

Consultation questions

What do you like?
What have we missed?
What concerns do you have about the proposals?
What other opportunities are there?
Who do we need to consult and partner with?

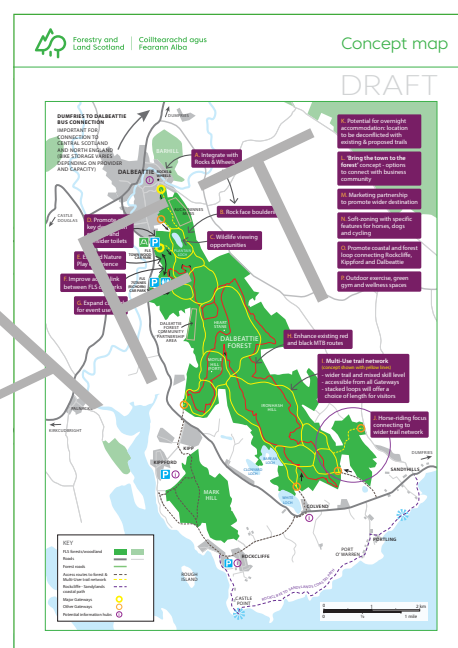
Link to online concept feedback: www.research.net/r/dalbeattieforest

Multi-User Trail Approach

In the concept map, we suggest a Multi-User Trail approach. We propose a network of green and blue graded mountain bike trails to cater to various users, including cyclists, walkers, wheelchair users and equestrians. Traditionally, these trails have been popular with a diverse range of groups due to their accessibility, boasting gentler slopes and simpler trail features. Compared to the more challenging red and black routes, nevertheless, they've fallen short in width and diversity, lacking ample space for passing and the variety needed to engage users with different skills and interests.

This new concept marks a change in approach. We aim to create a network that serves a broader audience without sacrificing the engaging elements of mountain biking design. It introduces wider trails to accommodate cyclists and walkers, ensuring the route remains enjoyable. Along the way, we're also integrating optional features like scenic viewpoints and rest areas to enhance the overall experience.

In summary, our multi-user trail network will not only uphold our commitment to the mountain biking community but will also welcome a variety of users, enhancing the overall trail experience.



Appendix 2: Consultation visuals

Consultation poster, feedback form and visuals from public consultation 2

Forestry and Land Scotland | Callthearachd agus Fearann Alba

Feedback form

Dalbeattie Forest: Visitor Masterplan Consultation - stage 2 Feedback form

You do not need to respond to all questions and please do not share any personal information.

1. What do you like about the proposal?

2. What do you not like about the proposal?

Please turn over

Link to online concept material and feedback: www.research.net/r/dalbeattie2

Forestry and Land Scotland | Callthearachd agus Fearann Alba

Feedback form

3. Any other comments about the proposal?

Thanks for your feedback. If you have any comments about the content of this survey, please contact fiona.murray@forestryandland.gov.scot

Forestry and Land Scotland | Callthearachd agus Fearann Alba

Dalbeattie Forest Visitor Masterplan Consultation: detailed proposals

Another opportunity to have your say

In March, we showed you our ideas. Thanks to the detailed feedback from groups, individuals and organisations in and around Dalbeattie, we're ready for the next step.

Our National Visitor Services team representatives are coming back to Dalbeattie, to show you our new proposals and discuss the ongoing consultation process. We're also there to answer questions, take feedback and discuss any ideas or concerns.

Drop in sessions will be held on:

Friday 14th June:
10:00 – 18:00

Saturday 15th June:
09:30 – 14:00

Dalbeattie Community Initiative
71 High Street
Dalbeattie
DG5 4AA

The detailed proposals and feedback questionnaire will also be available online from Thursday 13th June until Sunday 30th June at: www.research.net/r/dalbeattie2

Forestry and Land Scotland | Callthearachd agus Fearann Alba

Dalbeattie Forest

DALBEATTIE FOREST VISITOR MASTERPLAN

COMMUNITY CONSULTATION STAGE 2

WHAT IS THE MASTERPLAN?

These plans, once finalised, will act as a framework for future investment in recreation for the communities and visitors to Dalbeattie Forest and the surrounding area. To deliver the masterplan it will need partnership from communities, public bodies, third sector and commercial businesses.

The masterplan is a set of individual projects and will create a range of recreation development opportunities that could be delivered if the funding and business case is approved. There is no guarantee that any of these proposals will be delivered. This plan aims to set a clear vision for the future recreation and tourism offer to help guide partnerships, funding bids and business cases.

Link to online concept feedback: www.research.net/r/dalbeattie2

